



MAYOR STEVEN M. FULOP

requests the honor of your presence at the

2017
State of the City Address
Ward D

Thursday, March 2, 2017

6:30pm

Christa McAuliffe School P.S. 28

167 Hancock Avenue

RSVP not required. Please check www.jerseycitynj.gov for weather alerts.

Good evening, and welcome to the fourth year of our State of the City address together, and the third of the 2017 series.

I want to thank the public officials from the state and the county who have joined us tonight; members of the clergy; members of the court; the Jersey City Council who have been partners in everything we do; fellow members of my administration; and, most importantly, the residents of this great city.

I want to start by welcoming you to the third address of this series, which is focused on Ward D. While we have worked hard to build one Jersey City, we understand that each of our communities require a tailored address that highlights the local issues most important to you and to your neighborhood. Tonight I hope to speak to these local initiatives, as well as touch on some of the larger citywide accomplishments and goals.

In July of 2013, I stood in front of City Hall and took the oath of office as the 49th mayor of Jersey City. It was one of the proudest moments of my life, and something I remain thankful for each and every day. As your new mayor, I promised I would work to make you proud, and that is what we have tried to do as an administration for the past three and a half years.

I spoke about bringing jobs to our residents and about bringing investment to neighborhoods west of the waterfront. I talked about the importance of strong schools and the drive to provide all of Jersey City's students with the opportunities they deserve. I was passionate about encouraging new businesses to move into Jersey City, and about how small businesses are the foundation of our local economy. I talked about my commitment to making Jersey City one of the best mid-sized cities in the country, and while we still have more work to do, I believe we have started to reach the benchmarks we set out to achieve.

During those first few moments, on the steps of City Hall, I outlined my plan, and my hope, to build an administration that would truly move our city forward. We have had some incredible successes, as well as some challenging moments, but overall, I am proud to report to you that the state of the city is as strong as ever.

I honestly believe that the success of any government is measured by tangible results, and I know that we have so much we can point to that proves our progress. During the past three and a half years, we have built a city that has become the economic engine of the region; a city that has become an example of innovative solutions to social issues; and a city that has accomplished it all while remaining fiscally responsible to its residents.

We have seen unemployment in Jersey City drop to the lowest rate in 25 years. This has been no coincidence, but rather, has been the result of a deliberate process of working together with businesses to bring jobs and stability back to Jersey City. On both job creation and small

business creation, we are number one in New Jersey. With job creation at the forefront of our policy priorities, we have brought over 7,000 jobs to Jersey City during the past three and a half years, and have seen over 600 new small businesses open here. We certainly have more work to do when it comes to ensuring that these jobs are being made available to all residents, especially groups that have been previously overlooked, but I feel as though we have begun to take important steps forward.

We have continued to lead the state in construction starts, with nearly 10,000 units currently under construction, and another 17,000 units approved. For the first time we can say that development is not exclusive to one neighborhood. Whether you live on the West Side or in the Journal Square – you have seen the outcome of the hundreds of millions of dollars worth of investment that we have brought in to our city.

Above all, it is important to us that this progress is inclusive, and we have worked hard to ensure that there are opportunities for all residents, in all wards. We have built more affordable housing during the past three years than any prior administration in the city's history. We are making progress on this crucial issue and plan to expand on this success throughout 2017.

We have continued to invest in housing for our city's veterans as well, and as a Marine, these projects are especially meaningful to me. We were the first in New Jersey to take on Michelle Obama's Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness, and we are well on our way to accomplishing this goal. This past October, we opened a development specifically for homeless and disabled veterans, which includes on-site social services. I want to thank Freeholder Bill O'Dea, Pat Kelleher and the Hudson County Building Trades for volunteering thousands of construction hours to make this project possible.

This year, we will continue to build on this progress, with an upcoming Ocean Avenue project in partnership with the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency that will add 20 veteran-priority units, with units reserved specifically for homeless veterans.

I am proud of the work we have done to make Jersey City a truly inclusive and progressive place, and I am exceptionally proud that our city has served as a model to others on so many policy initiatives. We were the first in New Jersey to enact paid sick leave legislation; we were the first in NJ to raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour for our municipal workers leading on this conversation from the front; we were the first in NJ to provide trans-inclusive coverage to city employees; we are the gold standard in New Jersey for creation of a model for prisoner reentry programs; and we launched one of the largest bike share programs in the country.

Most importantly though, we have effectively kept our promises to grow our economy, and expand services to our residents, without raising taxes. For three years in a row, residents have seen no municipal tax increases. We are doing this despite the fact we are investing in a

growing police force, we are expanding affordable housing, and we are investing millions of dollars in city parks. Few cities in New Jersey can make this sort of claim, and this year we are committed to keeping this promise yet again, with the announcement of no tax increases for the fourth straight year. Reinforcing this sort of progress, we also received our third consecutive credit rating upgrade last year, which is further validation of the progress we are making.

Tonight, I stand before you to deliver the final State of the City of my first mayoral term. I am honored to have been given the opportunity to serve each and every one of our city's residents during the past three and half years.

Each day of this term has brought us closer to defining, and effectively implementing our shared, collective vision for the future of our city. We have never showed signs of slowing, never relied simply on our most noteworthy accomplishments to move us forward, and never stopped working to build one Jersey City, issue by issue, neighborhood by neighborhood.

This past year, we have continued to advance our city, together.

Since the start of this administration, public safety has been at the forefront of our policies and priorities. We know that new jobs, new schools, and new services must be complemented by a strong sense of security in order to be considered successful. We have spent the past three and a half years strengthening our police force and finding innovative solutions to our city's public safety challenges.

I am proud of the steps we have taken to grow our police force to the largest it has been in 20 years. When we first took office in 2013, the Jersey City Police Department was at an all time low of manpower – 779 police officers. It was my goal to expand our police force to over 900 officers during our first term, and I am excited to report that the most recent class of police recruits brings our police force to 922 officers- the largest it has been in over two decades. Tonight, we are joined by members of two classes of recruits that are currently in the academy. I would like to thank this group for their dedication to our city's public safety, and I ask that they stand and be recognized.

This year, we are committing to further strengthening our police department by hiring two new classes of recruits, which will add 50 new officers to our police force. We are committed to having a police force of 950 officers. Building a safer city begins with building a strong police force, and I promise we will never stop working towards this goal.

It was only a few years ago that we inherited a police department that did not adequately reflect the diversity of our communities. We have come a long way since then, and I am proud that over 70% of the officers hired since 2013 have been minorities. Last year, we swore in one of the most diverse classes of police officers in the city's history, and have placed an emphasis on

continuing to build a police department that represents the composition of this city.

Our approach to public safety is comprehensive, and we understand that providing social services to families, and especially children, within our communities is the first step in reducing, and ultimately, preventing crime.

We have prioritized recreation and youth involvement programs as a way to keep our city's students engaged after school. We want our city's youth to use their time outside of school in fun, productive, and, most importantly, safe ways.

That is why we have added over 30 new recreation programs since the start of our administration. Last year, we expanded recreation programming in all six wards, and began collaborating with the Board of Education to bring programming to the city's schools after hours. In addition to conventional activities, such as basketball and soccer, after school programming also includes educational opportunities, including an engineering workshop and homework assistance.

One of the most recognized programs we started is our ongoing Jersey City Summer Works Initiative, which is now in its fourth year. This program brings together public sector, private sector, and local nonprofits to provide comprehensive youth employment to over 1,000 students a year in Jersey City. Programs such as this give young people in our communities a chance to explore different career paths, and learn skills that will help move them forward.

We want to make Jersey City a place that allows children to explore their interests, discover new ideas, and learn in exciting ways. We also want our city's youth to have access to opportunities that will allow them to succeed. Just a few weeks ago, the City Council approved plans for the expansion of the Liberty Science Center, known as SciTech Scity. The \$280 million project will be developed by the science center in conjunction with the city, and will feature a biotech lab, a coding lab, a technology business incubator and a K-12 STEM-focused public school. This is truly a transformative project, and one that will establish Jersey City as the home of the region's premier innovation destination, as well as educate the next generation of students as leaders in the fields of science and technology.

We view the Sci-Tech Scity project as an important long-term investment we are making on behalf of the city. While previous administrations would have simply sold this land for private residential development, we believe that by turning this land into a science, technology and educational destination, we are providing current and future generations with an incredible community asset that will benefit Jersey City for many years to come.

We have made incredible investments in enhancing education overall. During the past three and a half years we have regained nearly full local control over our public school district in

partnership with the Board of Education. After having been controlled by the state for more than twenty years, we are seeing true progress in improving education for all of Jersey City's students. Our city's teachers, administrators, the Jersey City Board of Education and Dr. Lyles deserve credit for this accomplishment.

In addition to the newly opened Dr. Maya Angelou school in Greenville, which was championed by Senator Cunningham, we look forward to the opening of two additional schools - a new public school to open Downtown in a residential housing development, and an Elementary School on Summit Avenue. The school on Summit will be the second new school opened in Jersey City this year. This pre-k through 5th grade school will educate more than 700 students from the surrounding neighborhood. As the demand for classrooms increases, we are excited to cut the ribbon on projects like this that prioritize our youngest residents.

We know that thriving communities include safe places to live, work and learn, but we also recognize the importance of investing in places to play as well. We have made expanding parks and open space a priority of this administration. We have spent nearly \$6 million in park renovation during the past three and a half years, and have increased city-owned parkland by 11%.

Last year, we opened Berry Lane Park, a project that we pushed through to completion by reallocating city resources and pursuing additional grant funding. This former industrial site is now the city's largest municipal park, and the first to be constructed in decades. When we opened this flagship park, we knew that this park would bring together families from all over the city, and I hope you and your family have had a chance to explore this 17-acre park, with its basketball courts, soccer fields, a football field and a spray park.

As we work to enhance our city through our investments in public safety, education, recreation and parks citywide, it became increasingly important for us to speak directly to the residents of each ward, not only about the state of the city as a whole, but also about the progress we are making in each individual neighborhood. We value the unique qualities of each of our diverse neighborhoods, and understand the individual role each plays as an important piece of the puzzle. We are here at the Christa McAuliffe School tonight to talk about the importance of the Heights, and the commitments we plan on making over the next year to move this neighborhood forward. We are committed to making significant infrastructure investments in this neighborhood, and will continue to work with the community to enhance the overall quality of life here.

This is one of the most unique neighborhoods in our city, and one that is defined by its sense of community. As a new resident of this neighborhood myself, I understand firsthand what this community means to you, and I am exceptionally proud to be a part of it. As a city, we recognize that the families within this community are as invested in the long-term vitality of this

neighborhood as we are, and we look forward to working together to build a better neighborhood for all residents. Accordingly, this year, we plan on proving the strength of our commitment to this community with two significant infrastructure investments that will benefit us for many years to come.

As stated earlier, our approach to solving our city's public safety challenges is comprehensive, and we aim to provide each of our neighborhoods with the infrastructure and technology that our local officers need to keep us safe. I am proud to announce that this year we will be commencing our building plans for a new North District police precinct, to be located on Central Avenue on city owned land in close proximity to the current station. The current building is over 50 years old, and no longer has the ability to serve this neighborhood with the dynamic resources we demand for a cutting edge police department. We will build a robust facility that also accommodates parking for police vehicles in order to relieve pressure on the surrounding communities. We are moving forward with this project, and we will start the process of design and construction planning later this spring, and subsequently, add the construction phase into our next capital plan. This is a long overdue project, and one that highlights our commitment to further investing in the Heights.

We understand that communities thrive when residents feel safe and comfortable, and our public safety investments in the Heights will work to further provide that safety and comfort. Our decision to build the North District along the Central Avenue corridor represents our commitment to supporting the growth of this important main street, and the hope is that this commercial district will bring even more new businesses and jobs to local residents.

However, our plan for the Heights and Central Ave includes more than just a new North District. We plan on using city assets to build important community infrastructure along Central Avenue in order to further facilitate the growth that is taking place here. I am excited to announce that we are committed to starting construction on Jersey City's first municipal parking deck right here in the Heights between Griffith and Bowers streets on City owned property. Later this year, we plan to transfer this property to the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency, and through a community driven RFP process, we will look to use city tools to incentivize private residential development, which will include a city-owned parking deck. These sort of trade offs have been successful in other areas of the city, and we know that we can achieve the same success using these methods in the Heights.

As you know, parking is an issue in this neighborhood, and we are excited to make progress on a parking deck that will address these concerns. At night, similar to other municipal lots, this parking deck will be free and open for public and overnight use, helping out residents that struggle with parking.

Together, these projects represent a renewed commitment to building a stronger business

district, and one that encourages visitors from throughout the city and the region to spend time at the restaurants and shops along Central Avenue.

The Central Avenue Special Improvement District is a community partner that is equally committed to the success of this goal, and I want to thank the executive director, David Diaz, for his dedication to this district. We have continued to build a productive partnership with this group, and I look forward to continuing to support their efforts.

Together, we are working to solve issues that impact businesses and residents everyday, along this avenue and throughout the larger Heights community. For example, we have worked closely with the Central Avenue SID to find solutions to sanitation and litter issues that persist here.

Two weeks ago, I met with the SID in my office to discuss several issues occurring along Central Avenue. Most notably, we discussed the SID's struggle with garbage collection due to Governor Christie's cuts in UEZ funding. We agreed that if the businesses are willing to share in the cost by raising their business assessments, we will help alleviate this issue by allocating additional manpower towards a trash collection program along Central Avenue. Later this month, we will begin assigning a team of hand crews to be under the auspices of the SID direction.

In addition, next month we will be installing new garbage receptacles that are designed to deter illegal dumping, while also providing more space to prevent overflow trash from ending up back on our sidewalks.

I want to recognize another group that has been vital in helping us to keep our neighborhood litter-free. The United for Clean Streets organization has been instrumental in advocating for solutions to this issue, and I want to recognize the initiative this group has taken. Thanks to this group, the City Council recently amended Jersey City's solid waste ordinance, which will increase fines for property owners who are negligent in clearing garbage from their properties. Previously, there was no real incentive for property owners, particularly large property owners, to follow these guidelines. Now, we are holding property owners accountable, and requiring them to keep their sidewalks and properties free of garbage. We are hiring additional inspectors this year, and will be looking towards community member to help us identify problem areas.

We know that these small changes will have a big impact on keeping our streets clear, and improving the look and feel of this neighborhood. We want residents of the Heights to feel proud of their community when they walk down the street. When we work together to keep our sidewalks clear and our buildings graffiti-free, we are taking small steps towards showing that we care about the quality of life for all residents within this community. We know that these issues affect your life each and everyday, and I promise that we will never stop listening to

residents like you to improve every aspect our daily lives.

We are committed to continuing to tackle these local issues, and have made investments in improving existing infrastructure as well. Last spring, the city began a repaving program to resurface over 16 miles of roads throughout the city. In the Heights, this included streets that connect this neighborhood, such as Bowers, Hutton and Franklin Streets, among many additional roadways that residents of this community use everyday. This year, we will continue to make these street upgrades, including the repaving of Palisade Avenue. We plan to begin the repaving of this road, between Paterson Plank and Reservoir, this spring, and will have this project completed by July.

We understand that local residents rely heavily on maintained roads and new parking decks, but we have worked to increase the availability of public transportation options here as well. Last year, we announced the expansion of service of the NJ Transit 119 bus route, which began 24-hour service in June. Through months of negotiations with the leadership at NJ Transit, we advocated for this service expansion because we knew that our residents rely on public transportation at all hours of the day. Working to enhance connectivity of this neighborhood is important for all residents of the Heights community, from working families to young professionals.

While our office pushed for much these needed changes, the most crucial aspect of advocating for this service expansion came from the community, and in particular, from the Riverview Neighborhood Association.

I understand why new residents are attracted to this neighborhood, and why existing families have continued to call the Heights home. Working with the RNA, we want to build a neighborhood that is even more dynamic, diverse and vibrant. This is why we are committed to supporting and encouraging the Riverview Arts District. This arts district, which was created in the 1980's, aimed to enhance the neighborhood's growing community of artists. This year, we are working to expand on these efforts because we understand the value that arts and culture holds in this particular community. Last year, the Riverview Arts District and New Jersey Community Capital received a National Community Arts Grant that will work to enhance arts and culture spaces throughout the Heights.

In addition, the Jersey City Redevelopment Agency has designated New Jersey Community Capital to develop several properties throughout Ward D as a part of the city's Abandoned Property Rehabilitation Act program. New Jersey Community Capital has plans in place to rehabilitate these abandoned properties along Palisade Avenue, which will include spaces for artist performances and use, as well as affordable artist units.

Encouraging a vibrant community that blends artists, families, young professionals and older residents, requires the existence of community associations that aim to bring together residents

of all types to work towards solving local issues. I am exceptionally proud to represent a city where community involvement plays such a crucial role, and I value working together with these groups to improve our neighborhoods.

As a city, we view community engagement as the ultimate complement to our progress. Whether it is partnering with the Central Avenue SID to clean up our streets, engaging with the RNA to enhance the local arts community, or working with the WPA on programming in Washington Park, the Heights is what it is because of the community spirit that you represent.

I want to thank the Riverview Neighborhood Association for their dedication to solving some of this neighborhood's most important issues, many of which were discussed tonight, and I ask that Kern and Roger of the RNA stand up to be recognized.

Recently, we met with the new leadership of the WPA on the new picnic area they will be opening later this Spring. This is a much anticipated project, and one that will provide the community a space to come together. I want to thank the Washington Park Association's new president Andrea Brachfeld, who is here with us tonight, as well as other members of the Association.

These community groups serve many aspects of the community, but have centralized their advocacy energy in the parks that they represent. We understand what these parks mean for this community, and we promise to continue investing in these spaces throughout the city.

This year we will continue on this progress as we complete the redesign of the Riverview-Fisk Park gazebo, which will include site improvements from new concrete sidewalks and curbing, to new benches, to better upgraded landscaping, and new fencing, and of course, additional trash cans.

We have continued to make progress on improving parks in this community, including last year's renovations of the Pershing Field Playground, which included new play equipment and water features. Many of you remember what the Pershing Field playground looked like prior to these renovations, with equipment that was dangerous and unmaintained. I want to thank the Jersey City Parks Coalition for serving as partners in this process, with a special thank you to Laura Skolar for her dedication to parks and open space throughout Jersey City, and within this community.

Later this year, we will be working with the local community to create a new master plan for Leonard Gordon Park, which was renovated to include a new playground in 2014. We look forward to continuing to hold visioning sessions to further the revitalization of this park.

So as we conclude tonight's update, I want to reiterate what was stated earlier, that the success of any administration is measured by results. In this neighborhood in particular, I know that this

progress can be seen everyday. Just as I stood on the steps of City Hall almost four years ago to discuss future priorities for our administration, I stand before you this evening to outline the successes we have accomplished together, as a community.

We did not come here tonight to simply offer a checklist of everything we have done right during the past three and a half years, but rather, we are here this evening to reassure you that we are making incredible progress together, and are moving forward in truly exciting ways.

Most importantly, I wanted to give you an honest assessment of where our administration stands on critical issues that impact your life every day and where we will focus on in 2017 . As our city, and our neighborhoods, continue to grow, we promise to never stop improving, and we hope tonight has served as further proof that we spend each and every day working to move this city forward.

Your presence here tonight shows that you care, and that you are willing to play a role in making our community even stronger. I sincerely thank each and every one of you for this, and I look forward to continuing to work together. I have found that building relationships with residents, and partnerships within the community, has truly been one of the most rewarding experiences of being mayor.

As we look to the future, please know that we will continue to act with personal care and attention, offering everything we have to creating one Jersey City that affords resources and success to all of our residents. With your help and perseverance, even during these politically divisive times, I am certain that we will continue to unite our neighborhoods, and we will all be better for our efforts. Thank you and God Bless Jersey City.